

SEEKING SILVER LININGS

BANFF & LAKE LOUISE TOURISM
2020 ANNUAL REPORT



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& CEO AND BOARD CHAIR
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Photo: @reelzaaa

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO AND BOARD CHAIR

There is no better way to wrap up 2020 than by saying thank you to all our members and partners for your support in what has been an incredibly challenging and unique year. It was just 10 weeks into 2020 when COVID-19 began impacting our lives and businesses in ways we never could have imagined.

We know this has been an incredibly difficult year for our members and the community at large. We also know that challenges will continue and we have more work to do together. Over the past year we've witnessed how critical working together is as a destination in order to navigate uncertainty. If there is one silver lining, this crisis has solidified our relationships with our members, the Town of Banff, Parks Canada and many other partners. Our organization is better for it. Where there was uncertainty, we sought opportunity.

Together, we put awe-inspiring moments on hold and took action: we have been quick to adapt our marketing to ensure we could respond to each phase of the pandemic. We connected with visitors in new ways while keeping guests and our community safe. We put great effort into protecting the destination's reputation and were able to safely welcome visitors while navigating the government restrictions. We were, and remain, nimble and adaptable.

We are incredibly proud of how Banff and Lake Louise were able to create new experiences for visitors, like pedestrianizing Banff Avenue and closing the Bow Valley Parkway for cycling. These innovative ideas featured safety as a priority and summer was better than what we expected because of this. These experiences were well-received and are a testament to how supportive and passionate the community is.

In 2020, our team kept Banff and Lake Louise top of mind for people unable to travel and we saw high engagement on our social media channels to reflect this. We also worked with key media outlets to continue to place our destination in travel stories even when travel was not happening, and to keep us on people's must-visit lists when they can start travelling again.

Our united approach has served us more than ever, from the Banff and Lake Louise Economic Task Force to the support and commitment of our wider membership. Our destination alignment on messaging made sure people who chose to visit knew what to expect: to plan ahead and help protect one another. This alignment will remain of utmost importance as we move through 2021 and beyond.

As a member-based marketing organization, we are committed to responsible fiscal management, especially in more challenging times. Like many, we revised our budget and restructured our organization to take an agile approach with both the short-term and long-term in mind. We adjusted marketing to ensure relevance in the midst of the pandemic, and we continued to focus on economic recovery while complying with local and provincial restrictions.

By working with our key stakeholders, we are confident in our ability to be ready to scale up when the time is right. Our collaborative approach will help ensure Banff and Lake Louise remains an iconic destination and will position us to recover. On behalf of our team, and our Board of Directors, we are pleased to share our 2020 Annual Report.



Leslie Bruce, *President & CEO*
Banff & Lake Louise Tourism



Pete Woods, *Board Chair*
Banff & Lake Louise Tourism



THE COVID-19 DISRUPTION

This past year was undoubtedly one of the most eventful and challenging years for Banff and Lake Louise and the world as the COVID-19 pandemic impacted all aspects of our lives, businesses and the economy. The year started with strong growth in January and February, and anticipated continued momentum from our 2019 efforts, including our best SnowDays to date, yet the world quickly changed.

The pandemic affected the tourism industry in ways we could not have imagined. On March 16, 2020, Canadian borders closed to visitors, and governments quickly encouraged people to stay home and refrain from non-essential travel. The province, along with the country and many other places across the globe, went into lockdown.

Banff and Lake Louise, following guidance from the Government of Alberta, worked to “flatten the curve” and help our community remain safe. This required a destination-wide approach, and the community worked closely together to ensure safety was the top priority.

Our strategy was nimble, from lockdown to the beginning of re-opening the economy. The changing situation required that we revise our business objectives three times during the year. This allowed us to respond to the ongoing uncertainties presented by the pandemic and to move toward recovery when the time was right.

On the pages that follow, you’ll learn how we evolved our initial objectives throughout 2020 to ensure we were able to effectively manage the fast-changing pandemic, and most importantly, set a foundation for Banff and Lake Louise to not just rebuild, but thrive into the future.

STARTING OUT 2020 STRONG

This was to be the final year of our five-year strategic plan and its supporting framework. The core objectives, strategies, and key tactics within it were informed by members, advisory groups, industry partners and our Board of Directors. Our 2020 efforts began with a focus on the strategic priorities and annual targets of our four pillars and eight objectives:

Generate year-round demand:

1. Grow visitation in winter and shoulder seasons
2. Defend summer revenue

Lead with brand:

3. Build destination brand alignment
4. Fuel traveller advocacy

Strengthen industry alignment:

5. Work together as a destination

Operate a performance-based business:

6. Promote employee effectiveness
7. Optimize investments
8. Deliver exemplary fiscal processes and outcomes.

January and February 2020 saw strong growth and continued momentum from our 2019 efforts. We focused on the execution of our Business Plan and our results—year-over-year hotel occupancy, Net Promoter Score, leads to members, social media engagement—demonstrate that we performed well.

One of the highlights from this time was holding one of our most robust SnowDays yet. And while we had to scale that event down in 2021, we have big goals for next year's event based on this successful program.

SKIJORING AND SCULPTURES HELP MAKE SNOWDAYS A SUCCESS

The snow sculpture competition in Banff, the annual ice carving competition at Lake Louise and the Tribute to Craft Cocktail Celebration were once again key pillars of the festival. We purposefully added components to the annual event that would engage the community. A new addition involved closing Banff Avenue for a skijoring demonstration by professionals from Skijor Canada. There was also a variety of wintry community races including fat bike skijoring, reverse dogsledding (humans pulling dogs), three-legged snowshoe races, and snow canoe races.

WORKING TOGETHER TO PROTECT THE COMMUNITY

In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic led to an abrupt closing of Canadian borders to visitors and the Alberta government quickly encouraged people to stay home and refrain from non-essential travel. The province, along with the country and many other places across the globe, went into lockdown. Thousands of Banff and Lake Louise residents were immediately out of work as businesses and services were required to close.

Attractions were closed, including ski resorts, gondolas and hot springs. Parks Canada in-person visitor services were suspended and trails and day-use areas not accessible. Tourism activities were closed: restaurants, retail, tours, museums, galleries, entertainment and events.

Following guidance from the Government of Alberta, our team quickly mobilized and shifted from attracting visitation to our destination, to communicating with our members and ensuring they had all the information they needed when they needed it.

In response to this, we stopped all of our marketing activities and shifted our core objectives to:

1. Do our part to flatten the curve
2. Protect the destination's reputation
3. Deepen relationships with stakeholders
4. Ensure we have a viable DMO.

This was an incredibly difficult time for our community, and we wanted to ensure that we were doing everything we could to contribute to getting through this time, while also keeping our partners and stakeholders informed.

MANAGING ISSUES TOGETHER AND ALIGNING ON MESSAGES

We participated in the Town of Banff Emergency Coordination Centre and the Local Communications Working Group, from the outset of the pandemic, sharing key messages with partners and ensuring we were working together as a destination. The Local Communications Working Group, led by the Town of Banff, brought together communicators from organizations and businesses in Banff and the surrounding area, on a regular basis through the pandemic. The group created alignment with messaging, and managed issues together during this quickly evolving situation. The work of this team was integral to ensuring we were speaking as a destination and that our member businesses and partners were apprised of our current priorities and messages.

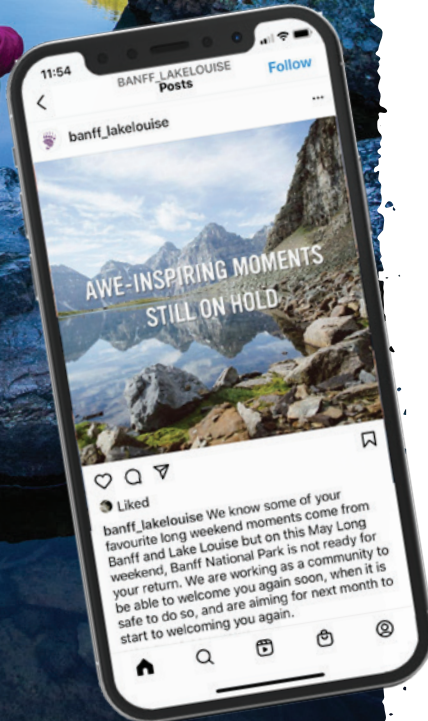


Photo: Paul Zizka

PROTECTING BANFF AND LAKE LOUISE'S REPUTATION

It has always been imperative to protect our destination's reputation. Without a strong and trustworthy reputation as a great place to live and a desirable place to visit, we risk the social license to operate, the support of our partners, and we risk losing the visitors we seek to attract. This was more resonant than ever during the pandemic, and we took this very seriously. We helped keep the community's safety as a priority through providing the support our members needed to understand and operationalize public health orders and guidelines. We evolved our key messaging to visitors to focus on what they needed to know before coming. We also expressed what our community needed to key national and regional news media and to government in order to receive the support we needed.

INCREASED COMMUNICATIONS TO MEMBERS

As the pandemic evolved and various restrictions were being announced, we increased member outreach and communications. At first, our priority was to ensure our members had the information they needed for their businesses to survive and their staff to stay healthy. We increased member communications, including our newsletter and website, and hosted webinars with partners to provide access to public health officials. We also launched a Google My Business education initiative to ensure our members could keep their customers effectively informed.

When we received certainty that we would be able to welcome visitors back as of June 1 with great hospitality and safety measures in place, we communicated to members about our focused plan to support the safe re-opening of the destination.

Key activities included:

- » Established Virtual Town Halls to share the work being done to support a strong visitor economy, sharing activities, results and plans
- » Watched daily government updates and digested them so others could easily access information
- » Connected with members one-on-one to understand challenges and gain insights
- » Increased the frequency of our member newsletter to daily publications to provide support and important resources, and timely and relevant information from trusted sources, including government and health authorities
- » Partnered on workshops to support safety and COVID-19 issues
- » Created a COVID-19 member toolkit to provide support on key messaging and business guidance.



**96 MEMBER
NEWSLETTERS IN 2020**
UP FROM 26 IN 2019



Photo: Damian Blunt

HELPING SET SECTOR-SPECIFIC HEALTH AND SAFETY BEST PRACTICES

In the absence of sector-specific health and safety guidance, we met with a cross-section of members in the retail, accommodation, activities and restaurant sectors to assemble and develop summaries of best practice. We then shared those documents through our member newsletter and in our COVID-19 Member Toolkit on our member website to encourage and influence businesses across the destination to set the highest possible standards from a health and safety perspective.

REORGANIZING OPERATIONS IN RESPONSE TO THE PANDEMIC

Through the crisis we responded quickly to conserve cash and adapted our operational budget significantly to adapt to the evolving situation. We also made changes to the team. Prior to the crisis, our team was comprised of 31 salaried, full-time roles and nine hourly roles in our Visitor Centres. In total, 11 salaried staff and eight hourly staff were temporarily laid off. As the year proceeded, we were able to bring back some team members to support our new objectives; and we permanently laid off some positions. At the time of writing we continue to operate with a leaner team.

RESPONDING TO WORKING REMOTELY

Within days of moving out of the office, our team was operating in a virtual environment. Throughout 2020, we continued to innovate and evolve how we use tools like Zoom, Teams, Sharepoint, OneDrive, EFT payments and Concur. Despite the interruption, we successfully held our Annual General Meeting within weeks of its scheduled date. This gave members an important information touchpoint, and was the first of several virtual meetings with members through 2020.

REBUILDING OUR DIGITAL PRESENCE

In April, we advanced our digital presence by onboarding a new agency and rebuilding our channels. With this reinvention, we were one of the first Destination Marketing Organizations back to market and we continue to stay ahead with our digital marketing strategy.

RESPONDING TO RE-OPEN THE ECONOMY

In June, when we were able to start welcoming visitors back, we revised our objectives one more time to focus on re-opening safely and encouraging visitors to spend in destination. This required ongoing coordination from the tourism industry, members, Parks Canada and the communities of Banff and Lake Louise. This work focused on how to best serve visitors and our community, while being responsive to visitation levels, expectations and safety.

To support the re-opening of the economy, we once again shifted our core objectives:

1. Work with stakeholders to safely re-open the destination
2. Welcome visitors back to Banff National Park
3. Protect the destination's brand reputation
4. Encourage people to spend in the destination
5. Deepen relationships with stakeholders
6. Secure funding to support the DMO mandate.

These objectives served us through to the end of the year, equipping us for 2021 where we are remaining adaptable, nimble and ready to support the changing market conditions as we rebuild demand.

ECONOMIC TASK FORCE SUPPORTS EFFECTIVE RE-OPENING

BLLT, Parks Canada, the Town of Banff and Banff & Lake Louise Hospitality Association (BLLHA) created the Banff & Lake Louise Economic Task Force to deliver a phased plan to safely and effectively re-open the economy in Banff National Park.

The task force set five objectives to guide its work:

1. Safely re-open the destination
2. Welcome visitors back to Banff National Park
3. Protect the destination's brand reputation
4. Coordinate communications to stakeholders
5. Seek opportunities to test future sustainable approaches.

A selection of highlights achieved by the Task Force include:

- » The community worked together to re-open to visitors under guidance of health authorities
- » Actions in the community resulted in people feeling safe and having a positive experience
- » Visitor and resident compliance with safety requirements was affected by abundant information and safety messaging
- » Exclusive use of digital communications to visitors and elimination of handled materials
- » Changing public space to allow pedestrian and cycling opportunities was well-received.

SUMMER SEES SILVER LININGS

Safety was an essential consideration for everyone in 2020. It was integral for guests, members, and residents in public spaces and in private businesses as we worked to flatten the COVID-19 curve. New approaches were introduced with the primary goal of enhancing safety and social distancing, such as adding a Banff Avenue Pedestrian Zone and cycling on the Bow Valley Parkway, which was closed to vehicle traffic. These experiences were incredibly well received by visitors because they were safe and provided new reasons to visit.



97% VISITORS WOULD
LIKE TO SEE THE
PEDESTRIAN ZONE RETURN AS A
PERMANENT SUMMER FEATURE





Photo: Paul Zizka

HOSTED WORKSHOPS AND WEBINARS FOR SAFETY AND SUPPORT

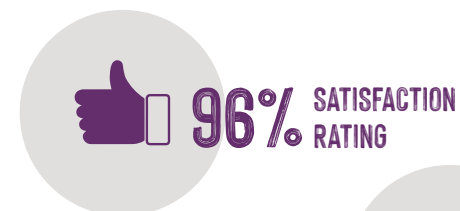
In collaboration with our partners at Banff Lake Louise Hospitality Association (BLLHA), we co-hosted Health & Safety webinars with Alberta Health Services (AHS) focused on the various protocols in place and new restrictions implemented by the province. 55 members participated.

An additional session was hosted with Dr. Christine Kennedy, Zone Medical Officer of Health for Calgary. Members were able to submit specific questions to get a deeper understanding of contact tracing. AHS representatives from Canmore and Banff were also available to speak to specific examples unique to the Bow Valley during that critical time.

These webinars were initiated to help the community reduce the spread of the virus, and ensure we remained open and welcoming visitors safely.

Additionally, we hosted two Google My Business workshops and a dedicated online course hub accessible to members. Google My Business is the most helpful tool to update customers on current business status and adapted operating hours.

Google My Business workshop highlights include:



BEING WHERE THE VISITOR IS (ONLINE)

Delivering virtual and mobile visitor services throughout the year, despite closures of traditional Visitor Centre buildings, enabled us to help visitors with trip planning. We shared key messages with visitors through live chat, telephone, email, TripAdvisor forums and Google comments. Mobile visitor services also helped inform visitors and generate leads to members.



“Sam was just perfect! And I am so glad you have this kind of service for anyone who would like to know more about the ins and outs of visiting Banff and Lake Louise.”

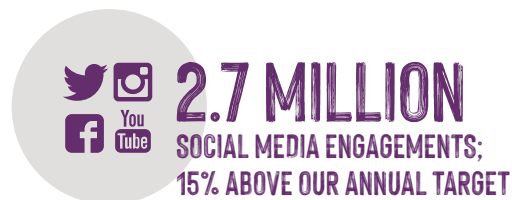
EXPEDIA CAMPAIGN SUPPORTS SUMMER

From June through September, we targeted users of Expedia and its portfolio of platforms that were searching for mountain destinations in a campaign to drive room nights and longer stays. Initially launched in Alberta, and

expanded to B.C., the campaign exceeded monthly room night and revenue targets by over 20 per cent.

SOCIAL MEDIA HELPS KEEP OUR AUDIENCES ENGAGED

Despite our international audience being unable to travel, we kept them interested in Banff and Lake Louise. This success has helped to keep the destination top of mind and deepened our relationship with visitors. The emotional connection our audiences have to our destination was evident during this incredibly difficult time. Content shifted to virtual experiences and deep connection to the local community as we shared stories of resilience and goodwill. We not only surpassed our goal of 2.4 million engagements by the end of November, but we grew our total social followers to over 535,000.



535,308 TOTAL FOLLOWERS;
4% SHORT OF 2020 GOAL



Photo: Banff Sunshine Village



Photo: Devaan Ingraham

SUCCESSFULLY SHIFTING TO SECURE MEDIA COVERAGE

In 2020, we successfully focused on generating media coverage in key Albertan and Canadian outlets. Key themes of the year included adventure, food, winter and how to experience Banff and Lake Louise virtually.

Our new offerings, including the cycling opportunity on the Bow Valley Parkway, the new restaurants that opened and In Search of Christmas Spirit generated a significant amount of local and national media coverage. Media was also very interested in how COVID-19 impacted the visitation to Banff and Lake Louise.



563 MILLION
PEOPLE REACHED THROUGH
3,364 ARTICLES

Highlights included:

- » *Vacay.ca*: 20 best places to travel in Canada for 2020: Banff is No. 1
- » *Men's Journal*: How to enjoy the best of Banff, without the crowds
- » *HGTV*: 10 memorable winter escapes for sun or snow adventures
- » *Forbes*: Visit Canada virtually with these top online attractions
- » *Thrillist*: Banff is one of North America's best skiing destinations
- » *En Route*: 7 Canadian Hikes That Are Even More Stunning in Winter
- » *CBC*: This beautiful immersive lantern walk in Banff is sold out but you can see it here.



NET PROMOTER SCORE REFLECTS DIFFICULT YEAR, HELPS US UNDERSTAND VISITOR EXPECTATIONS

Since 2016, the Net Promoter Score (NPS) has been used to measure visitor satisfaction. The score reflects the likelihood someone will recommend Banff and Lake Louise. In 2020, a 10 point drop in NPS can be attributed to post-COVID-19 expectations, including value for money, sanitary and safety conditions and overall convenience of visiting sites. It also reflects a larger percentage of repeat visitors that tend to be more critical of the quality of the Banff and Lake Louise visitor experience. This was a hard year in the field dealing with tired and stressed visitors that were more demanding than ever.



66 NPS ACHIEVED
10 POINTS BELOW ANNUAL TARGET

ADVERTISING ON SOCIAL MEDIA SUCCESSFULLY CREATES LEADS TO MEMBERS

Despite significant periods of marketing disruption, we achieved over 400,000 leads to members from paid advertising campaigns on social media. This was up 38 per cent from the previous year. We tested, learned from and adapted strategic, direct-to-member ads that drove the lion's share of paid social media advertising leads to members. This is hugely impactful, as this accounts for 85 per cent of total leads to members from paid advertising on social media.

Achieved 75.7 per cent of pre-COVID-19 annual target of 2.1 million leads to members

- » 72 per cent from banfflakelouise.com
- » 26 per cent from paid advertising
- » 2 per cent from Online Travel Agencies.

As an example, we virtually connected our fans with members as COVID-19 restrictions tightened leading up to Christmas. Three critical pieces of content bolstered leads to members during December:

- » Online Christmas Shopping in Banff National Park
- » Virtual Artisan Christmas Market
- » Holiday Recipes of Banff and Lake Louise.

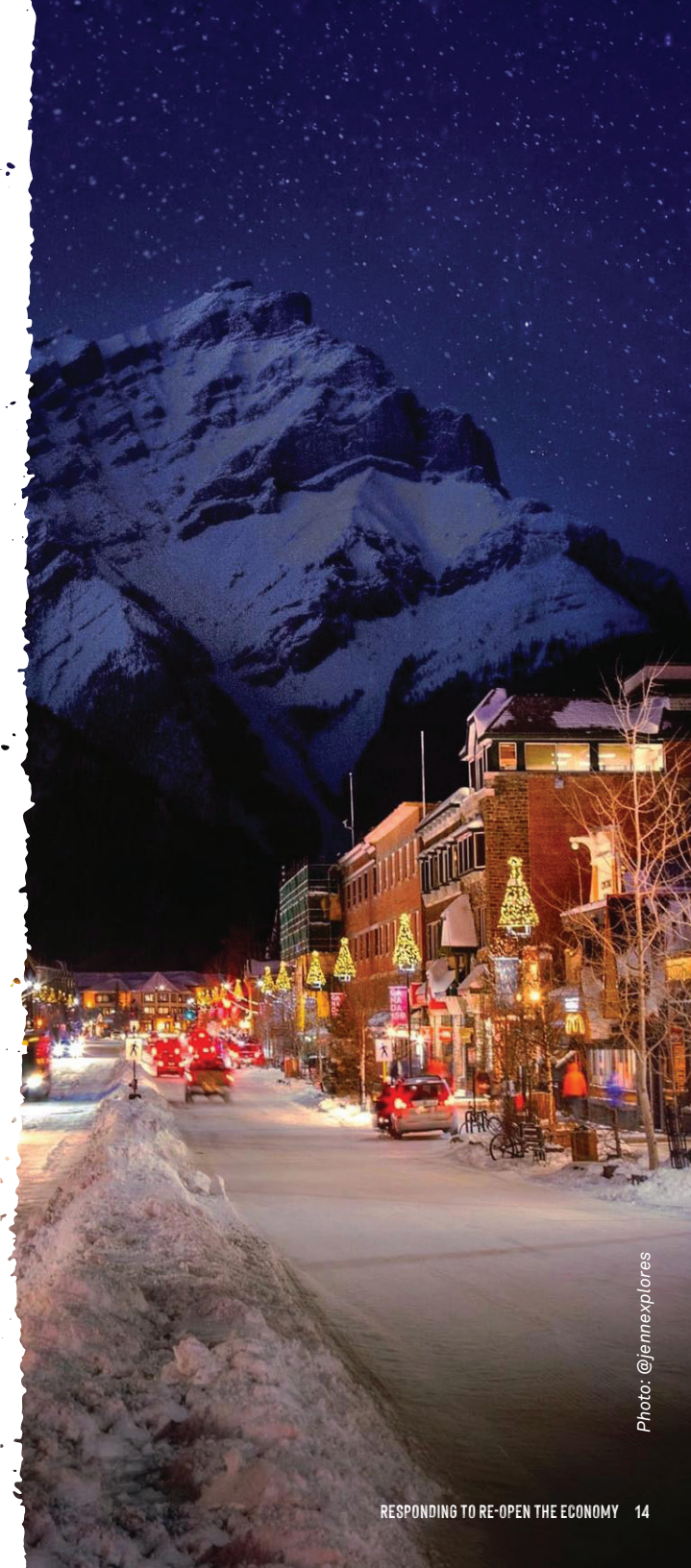


Photo: @jennexplores



Photo: @chrschm

THE BEST VIRTUAL PRESS TRIP IN THE WORLD

With hosting capabilities limited, we pivoted and executed our first ever virtual press trip, The Best Virtual Press Trip in the World, in October. The first-of-its-kind event hosted 27 top-tier, targeted media from across North America and Australia and led to media coverage, future hosting opportunities and most of all, stronger relationships with key travel and consumer media. Over four hours, we were able to pitch fresh and relevant story ideas, live stream member experiences and strengthen relationships with important media contacts worldwide.

EVENT TASK FORCE FORMED; TASTE FOR ADVENTURE PUTS RESTAURANTS IN SPOTLIGHT

An Event Task Force consisting of BLLT and members was formed to support a coordinated approach to events that leverages resources and efforts across the destination. In addition to In Search of Christmas Spirit, the Task Force developed and executed Taste for Adventure, Pride, Holiday Programming and prepared for an adapted SnowDays in January 2021.

KEEPING TOP OF MIND IN THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY

In 2020, although group travel was completely unavailable for the bulk of the year, we continued to strengthen relationships with tour operators and Meetings, Incentives,

Conferences, Exhibitions (MICE) markets, knowing these partnerships are key as we move to rebuilding the economy in 2021 and beyond. A few highlights from this area, included:

- » Created marketing campaigns with Ontario and Quebec tour operators focused on the winter season
- » Launched the Trade Product Information Platform to provide tour operators and other partners with information on Banff and Lake Louise experiences
- » Maintained alignment with partners at Travel Alberta and other Destination Marketing Organizations (DMO) by participating in the Travel Alberta International Rebuild Group
- » More than doubled participation in our Travel Trade Advisory Group
- » Continued to support the MICE incentive program throughout the year
- » Trained over 650 travel agents to update and educate them on domestic and international travelers
- » Attended two online tradeshow:
 - 20 appointments at World Travel Market
 - 25 appointments and 10 media meetings at US Tour Operator Association.

"It was beautiful, and so uplifting!! Brought me to tears. reminded me of the power of community and how lucky we are, despite everything going on around us. I am so grateful I was able to share the experience with my family."

Photo: Paul Zizka



IN SEARCH OF CHRISTMAS SPIRIT: A COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY

After adjusting and modifying plans to meet AHS guidelines, In Search of Christmas opened and created a heartwarming and inspiring experience for Bow Valley locals only. The story was told by the wildlife of Banff National Park and featured a sensory extravaganza of light, sound and social distancing. The learnings we garnered from this year will inform how we enhance this experience to build demand and attract visitation in Christmas season 2021.

"It was such a special evening! The lights, the story, the excitement. It was a safe activity to do during a pandemic and really helped our Christmas spirit. I hope this becomes an annual event!"

IMPACT OF COVID-19 FELT ACROSS THE DESTINATION

In 2020, Banff & Lake Louise Tourism generated \$5,555,908 in member revenues compared to \$10,318,626 in 2019. Decreases were largely a result of lower accommodation sector revenues.

While member revenue was cut in half, BLLT was successful, thanks to the work of our team and the advocacy efforts of our partners, in earning \$3M of grants and subsidies through Western Economic Diversification, Travel Alberta and Destination Canada. We are grateful for the support of these organizations and for our colleagues at BLLHA that worked with us to advocate for these funds. This relief funding led to a surplus which, in addition to our reserves, will position us to be able to market aggressively over the coming years.



MARKETING COSTS 86 PER CENT OF TOTAL EXPENDITURES

To maximize our value to members and Banff and Lake Louise's tourism economy, we minimized operational costs and maximized investment in destination marketing programs. In 2020, we successfully achieved average annual marketing costs as 86 per cent of total expenditures, above our target of 85 per cent.



\$3 MILLION
IN GRANTS AND SUBSIDIES



Photo: Neal Hendrickson

FINANCIALS

STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2020

	2020	2019
REVENUE		
Financial contributions	5,555,908	10,318,626
Other revenue	542,328	1,440,380
Total Revenue	6,098,236	11,759,006
EXPENDITURES		
Marketing	3,987,766	7,516,991
Visitor Experience	2,316,974	3,328,768
Finance and Administration	988,223	1,153,615
Total Expenditures	7,292,963	11,999,374
(Deficiency) Surplus before other items	(1,194,727)	(240,368)
Other Items: COVID-19 Relief Funding	3,050,892	
Surplus (Deficiency)	\$1,856,165	\$(240,368)

NOTE:

This statement is abbreviated. For the complete audited statement please contact our member and board relations manager, Althea Smith-Hay, at asmithhay@banfflakelouise.com.

ACCOUNTABILITY

We are committed to transparency. Disclosing how funds collected from our members are spent instills confidence that we have the best practices in place. To ensure accountability, an Audit and Finance Committee, consisting of three Board of Directors, reviews and approves financial reporting and retains an external auditor. Our financial statements are audited annually.



THANK YOU

THANK YOU TO OUR DEDICATED
MEMBERS FOR HELPING US
WEATHER THE STORM.

BANFFLAKELOUISE.COM

BANFF
& LAKE
LOUISE
alive